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Photo Essay: Deng Xiaoping's Failed Reform in
1975-1976

Zhaohui Hong, *The Price of China's Economic Development: Power, Capital, and the Poverty of Rights*,
Lexington, The University of Kentucky Press, 2015, 296 pp.

Benoît Vermander

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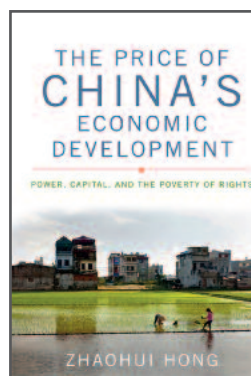
turned into the second strategy of territorialisation in Tibet. The author clearly outlines how Tibetans were prevented from taking advantage of the new liberalised market due to the concurrence of Tibetan traditional social relations and cultural norms, the failure of technology transfer from Han workers, and the sharp contrasts between “scientific” agriculture and traditional use of the land. The interiorised Tibetan negative notion of Chinese-style development as systematically spoiling the land with chemical fertilisers and corrupting the people through urbanisation made Tibetans live in a renting economy that gave up increasingly larger portions of the land to Han immigrants to build greenhouses. The author attentively argues that the reproduction of economic and ethnic imbalance in Lhasa was also connected to the failed applicability of the Chinese popular concept of *suzhi*, the quality of place and people, to the city of Lhasa. In inland China, the increment of *suzhi* is in fact deliberately associated with urbanisation: moving to the city from the countryside means an automatic rise of *suzhi* that, in the case of the small and under-populated Lhasa, dramatically failed to meet Han immigrants’ expectations: based on dominant representations of backwardness, dirtiness, and superstition, Tibetans were and still are considered low in *suzhi*, as is Lhasa, a periphery becoming urban.

In the last part of the book, “Concrete,” the focus is on the enforced urbanisation of Lhasa and its environs that in the last decade has been pursued in order to spread development through building construction. The imposition of new living spaces that affects family relations and traditional use of the domestic space is one of the consequences of the state’s intrusive and pervasive presence in local lives. Once again, the Tibetan failure to “perform gratitude” for this new gift made of concrete is disapproved of, and its acceptance is forcefully imposed.

Constantly shifting policies regulate different programs aimed at restoring old villages, expanding the urban space, relocating people from old houses in the historical centre, and building new ones in the periphery. The author insightfully points out the specific economic dynamics of these housing projects involving both central Lhasa and the neighbouring villages, and defines the sources of investment that sustain them. Although the state provides a substantial contribution towards most of the housing plans, house owners themselves are required to cover part of the funding. Being dependent on both private credit and bank loans, Tibetans’ involuntary participation in the state’s development and urbanisation projects becomes an inescapable condition of indebtedness. The book ends with further reflections on the Maussian theory of the gift, originally elaborated in the context of “archaic” societies, and its applicability to contemporary state-citizens relationships in Tibet.

This work is a notable contribution to the study of the PRC’s long-term development strategies to incorporate peripheral areas within the body of the state and to clearly demark its territory in a way that, as the author notes, sinisterly echoes state terror.

■ Valentina Punzi is currently a postdoc researcher at Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale, Italy (valentina.punzi@yahoo.it).



Zhaohui Hong,
The Price of China's Economic Development: Power, Capital, and the Poverty of Rights,
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BENOÎT VERMANDER

The author of this work, an expert in economic history, takes an interdisciplinary approach to study the non-economic consequences of the developmental process followed by China since 1978. So it does not take into account such matters as the environmental aspects of that growth but is concerned mainly with the social and cultural costs of the model that has predominated throughout the period. The author notes that even the notion of a “price” or cost does not imply any value judgment: every growth process comes with a price tag. The question is one of assessing the price in relation to the confirmed benefits, especially if the price in question involves a burden imposed on a considerable number of people.

The interdisciplinary aspect of this analysis arises from the tripartite nature of the transitions undergone since 1978: from a planned to a market economy; from an agrarian to an industrial society; from a traditional to a civic culture. The author advances two main theses, the first of which is that these three transitions have combined to form a “power-capital institution” (or, in Chinese, *quanli ziben zhidu* 权力资本制度) made up of an economic structure, a culture, and specific players. This institution manages the transfers from political power to capital and vice-versa; within it the players ensure the maximisation of their profit from the use of labour power by capital; and finally, the overall institution takes the form of specific institutions, norms, values, and discourses. It goes without saying that the relationship between political power and capital has radically changed since 1949, and that the study of the modes of their interconnection has become necessary for understanding the current system in China.

The second thesis that forms the framework of this volume is that this “power-capital institution” has arisen in parallel with a “poverty of rights.” The term applies to civic, economic, social, political, and cultural rights, along with the absence of any space where such rights could be claimed. The nature of the discriminations linked to the poverty of rights has itself developed in tandem with the reform process, and the denial of those rights is the direct cause of both the poverty and the low morale weighing on certain sectors of the population. So the study of the “denials of rights” coming into effect at different stages in the developmental process should have to form an integral part of the history of the process, enabling a comparative approach to it, and influencing in turn its future planning. (Incidentally, it seems to me that one of the most interesting ideas in the work is precisely that the various rights – to property, free expression, social security, etc. – are subjected to denials whose vigour and extent vary according to the stages of any given developmental process).

This volume sets out these two theses in two parts, *The Haves* followed by *The Have-Nots*. The first is focused on the emergence and development

of the power-capital institution, studying it in three successive modes: as a political economy, as a coalition of entrepreneurs, and as a social culture. The alliance between political power and capital, whose main stages of development over the period in question are swiftly outlined by the author, took place in such a manner that ruled out the normal political expectations from a numerical increase in the size of the middle class. The author develops his theoretical perspective still further by analysing the "power-capital economy" as a system distinct from both a market economy and a centrally planned one, but functioning in a perpetual oscillation between the two, thus constituting itself as a semi-autonomous economic mode. He therefore argues for the need to see the socio-economic functioning of the Chinese economy as tri-polar. The ambiguity of this system largely explains the ambiguous nature of the strategies of the "entrepreneurs" at the heart of the power-capital institution. Moreover, the nature of the alliances set up by them has prevented the possibility of any progressive maturing of a civic culture worthy of the name. The dominant culture, writes Zhaohui Hong, is that of the "3 Cs" (Confucian, Communist, and Culture of Power and Capital). Here, too, he argues for an analysis based on a systemic analysis of these three dimensions taken as a whole in order to study the cycles of China's political culture and foresee its implications.

The second part focuses on the *Have-Nots* and is based on analyses of the different sectors. Its first chapter deals with China's urban population. Here the author goes beyond establishing a global link between poverty and restrictions on rights by arguing for affirmative action programmes targeting clearly identified groups, especially among the urban population. This line of analysis is extended to cover the various restrictions on rural property rights as well as on the legal and social status of migrant workers. The last chapter goes into considerable detail in order to throw light on the situation of "house churches," emphasising once again the restrictions on the exercise of the right to religious freedom. This chapter also contains a fairly strong programmatic side, urging the leaders of the clandestine Protestant churches to show more pragmatism and to make better use of the remaining space for initiatives.

The rather brief conclusion acknowledges the way in which "the power-capital institution" analysed in the first chapter of the book was perhaps the inevitable outcome of the reorganisation of the social strata and other restructurings at a time of unparalleled socio-economic transition. In this respect, the author does not argue for their demolition but rather for their integration into a legal framework with public supervision, and a progressive programme for increased democracy. China will be unable to reform itself without dissociating political power from capital, and this dissociation must be conducted within a reformed legal framework.

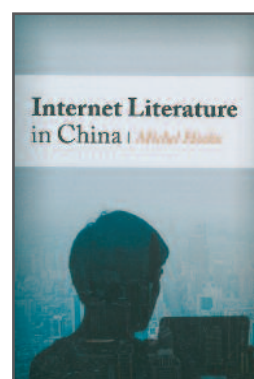
The main interest in this work lies in the systematic character of its analysis. This overall systemic approach is not without its risks: its nuances often get bogged down by a theoretical formula that dominates the whole without helping to shape all its developments. Moreover, the stress placed on the elites on the one hand and the disadvantaged on the other does not give due importance to developments and strategies specific to the middle class: the latter is said to have struck an implicit bargain with power in order to garner for itself some of the proceeds of growth – but the analysis hardly goes further than that. This observation should be extended through a study of the "social ruses" and cultural trends also operating within that middle class. After all, would this not be the very section of the population that is contributing to the extension of the rights conceded by the political power (albeit indirectly and only partially), reducing thereby the global "price" of

the growth process and creating some of the cultural and social resources omitted from this book's analysis? Because of this omission, the pages on the "civic culture" such as it exists in present-day China are perhaps too pessimistic, although that assessment may be open to question.

In any event, this book will certainly prove to be a valuable reference work (even if only to provoke queries) for any reader concerned with testing the models that attempt to give an account of the implicit "social contract" currently in force in China today, and to assess its durability as well as its weaknesses.

■ Translated by Jonathan Hall.

■ Benoît Vermander is a professor at the School of Philosophy at Fudan University, Shanghai (mdwei@fudan.edu.cn).



Michel Hockx,
Internet Literature in China,
New York, Columbia University Press,
2015, 251 pp.

SHUANG XU

Internet Literature in China is the fruit of Michel Hockx's work over the last decade. In this volume the author examines the new literary form in the broad context of Chinese "postsocialism," which he characterises as a "condition of ideological contradiction and uncertainty" (p. 13). His observations are based on his reflections, which combine literary and social questions. He asks how Internet literature brings about innovations in Chinese printed literature, as well as in the electronic literature that is already well developed in the West. And how does its publication manage to defy the government censorship system as it transgresses its boundaries? The author sets out to probe the phenomenon of Internet literature in order to examine the process of social transformation in China, and to offer "a general overview, useful not only for specialists but also for general readers interested in present-day China and its culture" (p. x).

The work opens with an overall presentation of the development of Internet literature in China (Chapter 1). The birth of this new literature in the 1990s is compared with the profusion of literary magazines at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Hockx, these two phenomena have some common features: literary innovation linked to new technologies, the formation of new communities around literary production, and the coexistence of differing literary tastes and divergent linguistic and cultural registers. He believes that Internet literature is in the process of establishing its own norms and values, which are not identical to those of its printed counterparts. The chapter ends with a study of the first literary website in China, "Under the Banyan Tree," which throws light on the methods of producing online publications, and on the actual practices of a literary community based on digital interactions. He also follows